

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GUATEM 01818 231832Z
ACTION DHA-02

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5324
INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
USCINCSO

UNCLAS GUATEMALA 1818

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SHUM GT
US
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT PUBLISHED IN GUATEMALA

1. MORNING DAILY GRAFICO MARCH 23 DEVOTES FULL PAGE TO
US HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT ON GUATEMALA, APPARENTLY
TRANSLATED BY GRAFICO FROM SENATE COMMITTEE PRINT (PAGES 124-
125, WHICH IT CITES. AT END OF TRANSLATION,
GRAFICO SAYS "TOMORROW: NICARAGUA", PRESUMABLY INDICATING
THAT REPORT ON NICARAGUA WILL BE PUBLISHED
MARCH 24. WE ASSUME THAT REPORTS ON OTHER CENTRAL AMERICAN
COUNTRIES WILL FOLLOW.

2. GRAFICO ARTICLE, WHICH IS ILLUSTRATED WITH UNIDENTIFIED
PHOTOS OF (A) A GROUP OF POLICEMEN WEARING GAS MASKS AND
(B) A BRUTAL MURDER VICTIM, GIVES ACCURATE ACCOUNT OF ORIGIN
AND REASON FOR THE REPORT, QUOTING FROM INTRODUCTION TO
COMMITTEE PRINT SIGNED BY SENATOR HUMPHREY WHICH EXPLAINS
SECTION 502.B OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT. HOWEVER,
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PAGE 02 GUATEM 01818 231832Z

TRANSLATION HAS AT LEAST FIVE MAJOR ERRORS, TWO OF
WHICH HAVE THE EFFECT OF ELIMINATING FAVORABLE
REFERENCES TO PRESIDENT LAUGERUD.

3. FOR EXAMPLE, GRAFICO TRANSLATION READS, "SINCE HIS
INAUGURATION HE HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO CONTAIN THE
LEVEL OF EXTRA-LEGAL REPRESSION THAT HAS FREQUENTLY

CHARACTERIZED GUATEMALA IN THE PAST." ORIGINAL US REPORT READS, "SINCE TAKING OFFICE HE HAS NOT COUNTENANCED THE DEGREE OF EXTRA-LEGAL REPRESSION THAT HAS FREQUENTLY CHARACTERIZED GUATEMALAN POLITICS IN THE PAST." AT ANOTHER POINT, TRANSLATION REFERS TO "STATE OF PUBLIC CALAMITY" AND SAYS INCOMPREHENSIBLY, "WHEN A SITUATION SUCH AS THIS EXISTS, PRESIDENT LAUGERUD HAS NOT MADE USE OF THIS AUTHORITY." ORIGINAL REPORT SAID, "WHEN SUCH A SITUATION EXISTS, THE PRESIDENT IS AUTHORIZED TO SEEK A CURTAILMENT OF CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS. PRESIDENT LAUGERUD HAS MADE NO SUCH REQUEST." STATEMENT AT END OF REPORT THAT FREEDOM HOUSE LISTS GUATEMALA AS "PARTLY FREE" IS ATTRIBUTED BY GRAFICO ARTICLE TO INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION AND NO MENTION IS MADE OF FREEDOM HOUSE. APART FROM THESE ERRORS, HOWEVER, GENERAL THRUST OF US REPORT COMES THROUGH CLEARLY IN GRAFICO TRANSLATION.

4. PRO-GOVERNMENT LA NACION REPORTED MARCH 22 THAT, FOLLOWING RECEPTION PREVIOUS DAY IN HONOR OF INTER-AMERICAN DEFENSE COLLEGE STUDENTS VISITING GUATEMALA, PRESIDENT LAUGERUD REPLIED TO PRESS QUESTION ABOUT US INTERFERENCE IN HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN GUATEMALA BY SAYING, "JUST AS WE WILL NOT ACCEPT CUBAN INTERVENTION, SO WE WILL NOT TOLERATE THAT OF ANY OTHER COUNTRY." ASKED ABOUT POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES FOR GUATEMALA OF THE TERMINATION OF SECURITY ASSISTANCE LAUGERUD COMMENTED, "FOR US IT WILL HAVE NO REPERCUSSIONS WHATSOEVER
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PAGE 03 GUATEM 01818 231832Z

BECAUSE, REVIEWING THE HISTORY, THE MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM BEGAN IN 1955 WHEN CASTILLO ARMAS WAS IN POWER. IN THAT PERIOD MILITARY ASSISTANCE CONSISTED OF ARMAMENTS, TRANSPORTATION, TRANSMISSION EQUIPMENT, SOME AIRCRAFT FOR THE AIR FORCE, ETC. BUT EACH YEAR THE MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM WAS REDUCED MORE. THE TIME ARRIVED, WHEN I WAS CHIEF OF STAFF IN 1971, WHEN THE MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM WAS REDUCED TO NOTHING. SINCE THEN GUATEMALA HAS BEEN BUYING ITS OWN. NOW WE RECEIVE NOTHING AS A GIFT EXCEPT FOR THE SPACES ALLOTTED TO OUR STUDENTS IN THE US. WE BELIEVE THAT THIS (REDUCTION OF ASSISTANCE) BEGAN IN 1971-72 BEFORE IT DID IN OTHER COUNTRIES BECAUSE OF OUR DISPUTE WITH GREAT BRITAIN OVER BELIZE, AS A RESULT OF WHICH THE US GOVERNMENT HAS PLACED ON US A SERIES OF RESTRICTIONS EVERY TIME WE WISH TO BUY SOMETHING FOR OUR DEFENSE. CONSEQUENTLY, WE WERE FORCED TO SEEK OTHER MARKETS BECAUSE OF THE US REFUSAL TO SELL ANY MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO GUATEMALA."

5. ASKED IF GUATEMALA, LIKE SALVADOR, WOULD WITHDRAW ITS STUDENTS FROM US MILITARY SCHOOLS LAUGERUD REPLIED, "WE HAVE NOT COME TO THAT EXTREME. WE HAVE FEW STUDENTS IN THE US AND PANAMA. THE QUOTA OF STUDENTS IS VERY SMALL."

6. COMMENTING ON A REPORTED STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT ODUBER OF COSTA RICA THAT AN ARMS RACE IS UNDER WAY IN CENTRAL AMERICA, LAUGERUD SAID, "I DO NOT BELIEVE IN AN ARMS RACE BECAUSE NONE OF THE CENTRAL AMERICAN COUNTRIES HAS SO MUCH MONEY AS TO INDULGE IN AN ARMS RACE. THIS IS REALLY NOTHING MORE THAN REPLACING OBSOLETE EQUIPMENT. FOR EXAMPLE IN OUR ARMY WE EQUIPPED WITH RIFLES MANUFACTURED FOR THE SECOND WORLD WAR. THAT IS, THEY WERE REBUILT WHEN WE BOUGHT THEM FROM THE US. AND I HOPE GOD DOES NOT WANT IT, UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 GUATEM 01818 231832Z

BUT IF TOMORROW WE ARRIVE AT A CONFRONTATION WITH GREAT BRITAIN I WOULD NOT HAVE THE HEART TO SEND MY TROOPS TO FIGHT WITH WORLD WAR II VINTAGE RIFLES, ESPECIALLY AGAINST THE BRITISH ARMY WHICH IS ONE OF THE MOST SOPHISTICATED AND TECHNICALLY ADVANCED IN ARMAMENTS." BUT, "UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WILL WE ACCEPT HUMILIATION FROM GREAT BRITAIN. AND IF WE HAVE TO DEFEND OURSELVES WITH THESE ARMS AND THOSE WE MAY GET FROM ANY OTHER COUNTRY WE WILL DO SO." BOSTER

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